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Defining the Future: an exploration of perceptions of employability of undergraduate minority ethnic students

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OBJECTIVES

- Background and theoretical context
- Methodology
- Emerging themes
- Future implications

Background and Theoretical Context

- 2011 Minority Ethnic Student Experience Project (Davies & Garrett, 2011);
- Necessity for research in this area:
 - Public sector equality duty (Equality Act 2010);
 - Call for further exploration (Connor et al, 2004; HEA & ECU, 2008);
- Building on participation, retention and progression discourse (e.g. HEA & ECU, 2008; HEA & ECU, 2011; Singh, 2011 etc.)
- Small body of work of existing work (US explorations and Peterson et al, 2005; Taylor et al, 2011)

Statistics

- Across UK, 18.8% of UK-domiciled students with known ethnicity BME (significant geographic variations) (ECU, 2013);
- Degree attainment gap in England 72.1% of white UK-domiciled students received a first/2:1 degree compared with 53.6% of BME UK domiciled qualifiers (significant variation between ethnic groups) (ECU, 2013);
- 56.5% of white UK domiciled leavers in full-time work, compared with 47.8% of BME UK-domiciled leavers (ECU, 2013);
- Lowest proportion of UK-domiciled leavers in full-time work was Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi at 42.1% (ECU, 2013).

Methodology

- Qualitative mixed method exploration;
- Research objectives:
 - To investigate undergraduate minority ethnic student attitudes towards categorisation of ethnicity;
 - To explore undergraduate minority ethnic law student perceptions of barriers and/or opportunities towards participation in the labour market.
- **Stage 1: Questionnaires;**
- Stage 2: Focus Groups;
- Stage 3: Semi-structured interviews.

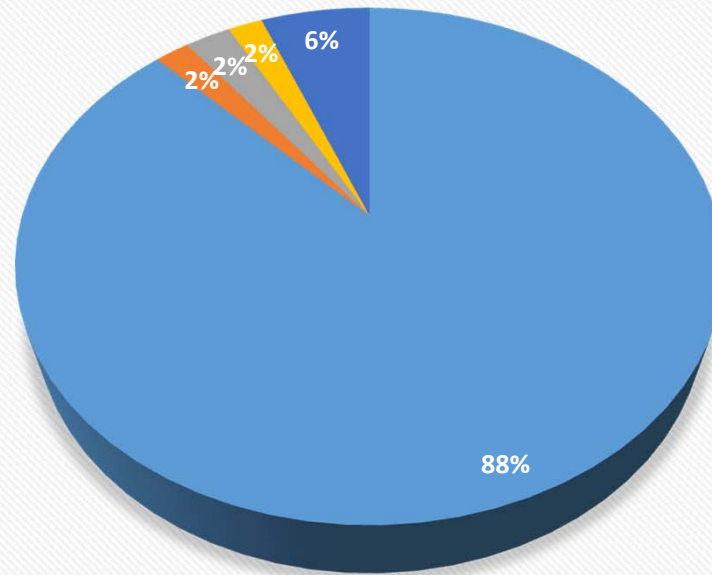
Stage 1: Questionnaires

- Purposive sample;
- Levels 4, 5 and 6 undergraduate law students;
- Census 2011 categories used;
- 245 participants;
 - White British
 - Celtic = Welsh, Scottish, Irish;
 - Minority Ethnic = other census groups.



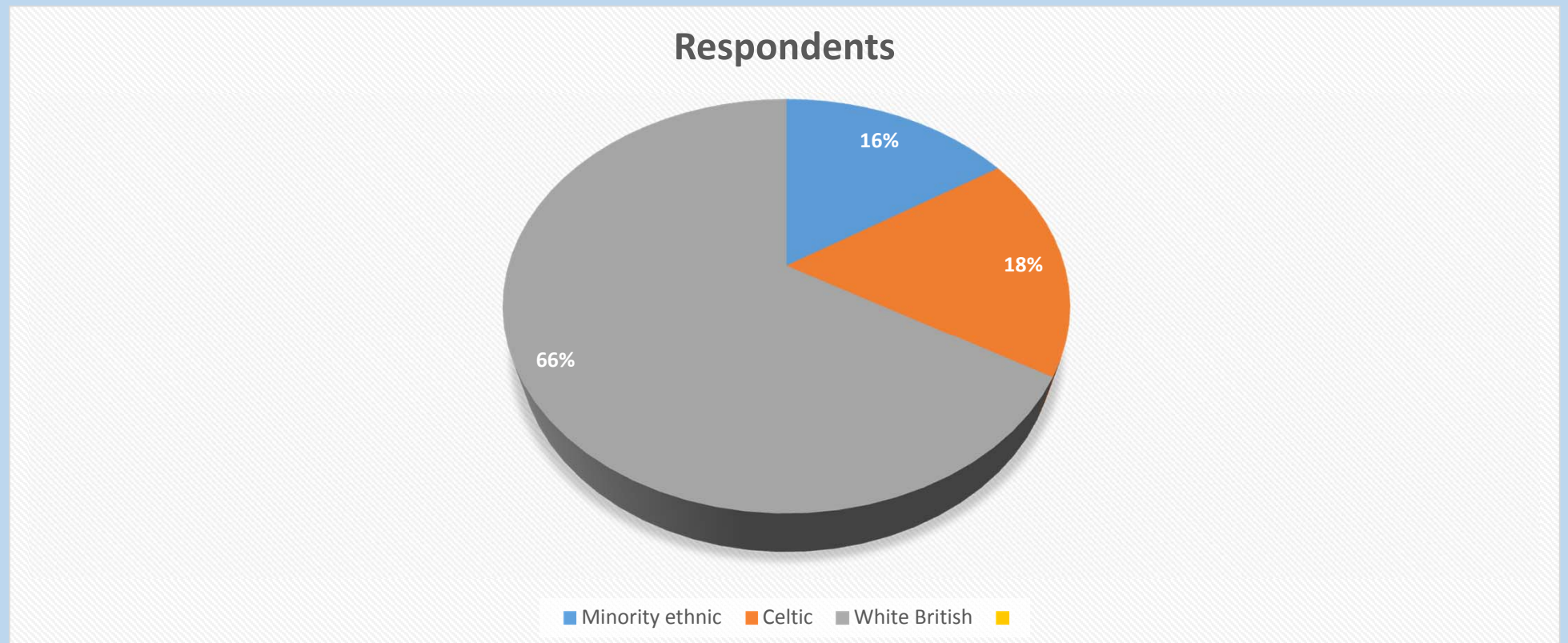
Institutional student breakdown

Students –Ethnicity (UOC, 2014)



■ White ■ Black ■ Asian ■ Other ■ Unknown

Questionnaire Respondents



Emerging themes from initial stage 1 data analysis: ethnic identity and categorisation

- Importance of ethnic identity;
- Importance of an emerging 'Celtic' ethnic identity:
 - *'We are proud to be Welsh especially abroad'*
 - *'It is important to me as being Welsh is my heritage'*
- Disconnect between identity and categorisation:
 - *'categorising ethnicity is not important at all, everyone is human'*



Emerging themes from initial stage 1 data analysis: perceptions of employability

- Future employability:
 - *'sometimes employers just treat other ethnicities better....'*
 - *'some employers are racist'*
 - *'some employers discriminate on job applications'*
- Personal perceptions of employability:
 - *'Dependant on the field of work in question, ethnicity may prove a hindrance to some'*
 - *'I will break the mould the world is changing more and more'*
 - *'Depends on which part of the country I'm living in'*

Emerging themes from initial stage 1 data analysis: perceptions of employability

- White British participants:
 - Range and ambiguity of responses;
 - No impact;
 - Positive impact:
 - *'There are certain quotas that need to be met.....'*
 - Negative impact:
 - *'some people may only want to employ a certain demographic which is unfair'*
 - *'although I don't think it should, employers like all humans will have prejudices brought on by societal projections and might be hesitant to hire those of specific races/ethnicities'.*

Future Implications

- Expansion beyond law students;
- Comparator institution with distinct student demographic;
- Heterogenic analysis of data (race, religion, gender);
- Drilling down of findings.

WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Twitter: @EqualityFRED

Linkedin: http://www.linkedin.com/groups/Forum-Research-into-Equality-Diversity-7417440?trk=my_groups-b-grp-v

Facebook: www.facebook.com/forumforresearchintoequalityanddiversity

Website: www.chester.ac.uk/FRED



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